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[Speaker 1] (1:33 - 1:04:04)

The sounds are not that important, of course. There's a lot of space in this kind. Just as with the Japanese flute, we may listen to one piece just for a few minutes, where what really matters there is not what is manifested, but what remains unmanifested.

That's the essence of that kind of music, if you can even call it music. Yes, it is music. Similar to paintings, certain Eastern, Chinese, Japanese, ancient paintings, where you might just see a little branch of a tree in one corner, and a rock, a small rock at the bottom of the painting, and a little bird flying across.

But 80% of the painting, there's nothing there. There's so much empty space. So that art form is perhaps the most spiritual of all art forms, because it points beyond itself.

It doesn't say, look at me, the manifested, how great I am. It says, look that way. So what arises in the contemplation of art like that is, when you contemplate it, the presence arises, inner stillness arises, as you watch, because there isn't much there to think about.

Another word we could use for this consciousness is space consciousness. Space consciousness arises in you. That is consciousness prior to becoming manifested as a form.

Consciousness, the essence. The very ground of all life. Life before it becomes a form of life.

The unmanifested one life before it is split up into, first into two, and then millions and billions of forms. So whether it's that art form where you visualize, it's mostly about nothingness. And as you watch that, space consciousness arises in you.

Awareness, thoughtless awareness. Consciousness prior to thought. And the same happens when you listen to that kind of music.

An awareness arises of the ground. The sounds are not that important. So we become aware of that which underlies the sounds.

The dimension of depth. And that's the depth within you. So when you withdraw attention from form, you're still aware of the forms, but you're withdrawing attention from the forms.

And what remains is pure attention itself. It's subtle, easy, not complex, but subtle. And we could say our gathering here has the same purpose.

Really, it's not in the words or whatever experience you have. It may be nice, too. You have nice experiences here, too.

But that's not it. If it were only that, then you would just add things to the content of me. The good thing is that that state of consciousness, which we might call presence or space consciousness, somehow transmits itself.

I don't want to become too esoteric here, but in some strange way, when one form enters that state of consciousness or it arises from within that form, it tends to spread to others. It awakens space consciousness in others energetically. There's almost a recognition.

The innermost essence of your being recognizes itself. That's why I sometimes say, people don't come here to listen to me or to see me. That would be pointless.

They come to be with themselves more fully. There's a reflective quality here, a self-recognition. And that's why sometimes people feel great joy and aliveness.

For the first time, they have dropped down below the level of mental noise and even below the level of the fluctuating emotions to the true depth, which is the inner spaciousness, which is just conscious, pure consciousness before it becomes something. You could say it's before the state, and again, without wanting to become too esoteric, the state scientists speak of, the creation of the universe in an explosion, as they call it, the Big Bang. That's the theory.

And nobody can say, what was there before the Big Bang? Nothing. So the whole universe must have come out of nothing.

There was nothing, because if there was something there, then it wasn't the birth of the universe. It was already there. So they say it started with the Big Bang, manifested existence, suddenly coming into being out of, they don't know what, nothing.

But when you start thinking about it, even the greatest scientists can't figure that out. It remains a mystery how all of this, all the galaxies came at some point out of nothing. So nothing, no thing, must be the ground of all being, of all existence, beingness itself.

And the strange thing is, the only reason why I mention that here, one could say, the state before the universe came into being, and that was a long time ago, that primordial state is still within each one of you as your essence. So, and then, it is born into form and thinking starts. That's the Big Bang inside.

It's the one, unmanifested, suddenly takes on forms, and that's the explosion. In you, it would be the explosion of sudden arising of thought. And then you can see that timeless essence was never really lost before the Big Bang.

It continues, untouched by the manifested universe. In you, yes, this is mystical teaching, true. So the source of all life, where is that, which some people call God, the source out of which all life arises, that is the essential identity of each life form, the beingness in each life form, is here now in you.

So you are the unmanifested consciousness. You are also temporarily the manifested form. That's your form identity, temporary, and your essence identity, one could say, the essence of your being.

Form identity is a realm of suffering, lost, to be lost in form, and not know yourself beyond your form identity, which has the two aspects, the physical body, form, short-lived, precarious. Anything could happen to it at any moment. You can slip on a banana skin, break your neck, and you're dead.

So it's very precarious. And the other aspect of your form identity is the psychological form of me in the head, that sense of who I am based on my past, and my story, my experiences, and the accumulation, the content of my mind, as an image, a mental image of who I am, reinforced by others around me, telling me, yes, that's who you are. Yes, that is your name.

Yes, that's your past. Yes, that's your ex-wife, your ex-husband. That's...

Yes, you're right to feel angry about him or her. Yes. Psychological identity, form, the psychological form of me, and the physical.

So that's where most humans derive their sense of who they are from the two aspects of form identity. And if that's all there is, and let's say your external form is extremely beautiful, and then the basis of that, most external forms don't have, don't feel that they are beautiful. But if it is, you sense, you form an image, it becomes an image of me based on appearance, and for a while it works quite well because you are better looking, or stronger, or whatever, than others.

And so it's a mixture of the external becomes an inner image of me, and then other things go into it too. And then the body goes older, and finally the form loses its vitality and beauty, and then the self image gets more and more shaky. And so, and then, but psychological forms also are very shaky.

They're very uncertain about themselves because they're also quite precarious. To live, to have an identity based on a psychological image of who I am, that depends on, to a large extent, on what others tell me, the feedback I get from the world, what the world is telling me who I am. And for a while, the world may be telling me you're great.

And then suddenly, they might be telling you the opposite, as in the example of the Zen master who was accused of having fathered a baby. So at first they think you're the greatest, and then suddenly you're nobody. Or the world forgets about you, and

nobody's telling you you're great anymore.

Or maybe the world never told you that you're the greatest. Maybe from childhood onwards, a mental image formed of somebody who is inadequate and not quite good enough. A self image based on inadequacy and lack, quite normal too.

But whatever it is, when you only know yourself as form, that's the realm of suffering. And if you're not suffering yet, and if you only know yourself as form, just, well, it'll come. And that's the simple truth of the Buddha who said the human condition is one of suffering.

And what he was talking about, the human condition, the unenlightened, the human condition only identified with form. That is, and no matter how hard you try, you can't get out of, you will encounter suffering. And again, that's what the Buddha said.

Whatever you do, whatever condition you go into and try to identify with, eventually it'll turn into suffering. That's what he said. And when academics read that, they say, oh, Buddhism is a pessimistic philosophy.

They miss something, of course. They also say it's a world-denying pessimistic philosophy. And of course, they've missed the essence.

Because the very essence of Buddhism also, like any other true teaching, is its points beyond that. So if you only know yourself as the form, you're condemned to struggle and suffering, frustration. The form is trying to somehow achieve a state of completion and never quite makes it.

So salvation or liberation or enlightenment is knowing that within yourself that is beyond your form identity. And that, now most people use the human mind to find that. And the mind is form and all the mind thought, all that thought recognizes is other forms.

So you can look for a lifetime, you can be searching through your mind for yourself. But you're using thought, looking for something that thought can never comprehend, grasp, retain. And so, and because thought operates in and through past and future, you're condemned to always seeking the carrot dangling in front of you, the carrot.

And this grasping, just almost, almost got it this time. And then. So it is not through thinking that you can find yourself.

And that implies it is not through future that you can find yourself. It is only here, the portal to your essence identity is this timeless now in which the mind stops. And what happens when the mind stops?

From the point of view of mind, there's nothing much there. There may even be a sense of unease. There's nothing here.

I want to get back into. If you can only stay with that nothingness without running back into mind, and that is related to what we said earlier about being at ease with not knowing, with a state of consciousness in which there is an alert presence, but nothing is in it. It does not contain a form, a thought form.

There is simply spaciousness. To stay with that, which is a very strange thing at first, a realm that you are reluctant to stay in for very long at first. I sometimes compare it to people who have just spent five hours in a noisy discotheque.

And that discotheque is in the middle of the countryside, surrounded by incredible silence and stillness. And suddenly they open the doors and step outside. The door shuts behind them.

And at first, it is so strange, after being bombarded with continuous sound, there's nothing here. Their ears are not even attuned yet to the stillness. All they perceive is that it's like an alien world here.

And let's get back into the disco. Of course, in this analogy, the disco is the human mind with its continuous noise-making activity, which becomes, you're accustomed to it. So to step out of that at first can be a little disconcerting.

And once you know that, it's okay, you can stay with that. But allow yourself to be a little disconcerted. Allow yourself to dwell in that realm that looks like nothingness.

Just stay there for a while. You can always run back into the disco. In fact, the disco has a magnetic pull.

It'll suck you back in. And then... And then you have to get out again.

But if you stay out for long enough, then after a while, the subtlety of that state of being reveals itself. Just as it would if you had gone outside of the disco and not obeyed the impulse to run back and just stayed there. And gradually, your ears would have become attuned to the stillness and perhaps a few subtle sounds that arise out of the stillness.

But you would have begun to notice stillness, which is not something you can think about. The moment you think about stillness, it's gone. Gone beyond thought, free of thought.

It is prior to thought, and it is post-thought. In humans, it is post-thought. It is beyond thought.

Animals and all of nature live also in the state of no thought. That's why they have no problems. That's why they are beautiful expressions of the one consciousness, an unproblematic expression.

So they could say they are prior to thought, and humans move beyond thought. It's not

that you fall back to the level of a plant. For some humans, that would be an improvement.

Humans who are dreadfully unhappy, if they could fall back to the level of an animal or plant, there would be some sanity there. And you can see when you look at many human beings compared to nature, how much more sane and how much more beautiful nature is, how much more dwelling within itself, not trying this or that. A state of, really still a state of connectedness with the one, not having gone out yet as far as humans have gone, left the state of oneness.

So nature has this incredible integrity to it. Everything in nature is itself. It is itself.

Not many humans are themselves. They are an image of themselves, the psychological identity which is being projected, trying to be someone. Some psychologists call it self-image actualizing.

And it's problematic. In nature, there's a simple, just if you watch the cat move, there's no projection of a self-image. It doesn't have a problem with self-image.

It is itself. Unproblematic, unless they've lived too close to humans for too long and they have taken on some of the madness of the human state. But it is beautiful to watch nature.

That's why it's such a help, and I so often point out to it. It is an expression of the one consciousness, and it lives. It still dwells within that stillness that is still in every tree and in animals.

And so there's also connectedness with this. There's a well-being. You can see it in a dog or in a cat, if you have observed them, when a cat pass, that deep sense of connectedness with being that's ananda, the joy of being.

And everybody knows a dog, how much joy there is in a dog. It's hard to find a human in whom there's as much joy as in a dog. It's incredible.

Some dogs are bundles of... And you just look at them and go... Miraculously, even dogs that have lived with neurotic owners for years are still joyful.

And perhaps the owner hasn't smiled in years and hasn't felt joy for so long. And there's this... And that's the only place where they can get a second-hand sense of joy when they look at their dog.

There's such connectedness with being there still, unproblematic. So that's prior to thought, there's still that connectedness. And then begins human existence.

Thought arises, the realm of human existence, and it becomes problematic. Paradise is lost. And then you move through that stage, and that can take a long time.

It has taken a long time. That is human history. And then, that stage becomes so painful and creates so much chaos and suffering that it cannot be sustained anymore.

And that's a sign that the species is ready to mutate to a new level. But that is not an automatic thing as it happens in nature. A transformation of a species can take half a million years.

It's happening much more quickly here, and it's happening because the species is choosing it. And there's the ability for humans to choose a new state of consciousness. Yes, it is arising.

That's why you can choose it. If it were not arising, you couldn't choose it. But it's a helpful perspective to say, yes, we can choose to step out of that.

We move beyond thought. We transcend thought. Of course, we can still use it, but we are no longer bound by it.

So, we are not returning to this beautiful, unproblematic world of nature that is not the way for humans. We move beyond. But then we meet again with nature because we both, what we then share with the world of nature is unproblematic existence.

And it is an enormous... It's not just a return to a state of oneness. It is a return to a lost state.

And now you know it for the first time. You know it. In nature, everything simply embodies it unconsciously.

And so, that is where you know your essence, not by perpetuating thought or thinking you can find it on the level of thought, but stepping beyond thought, out of the discotheque, into the stillness. And stay there, even if for a little while it seems strange. Take no thought for the morrow, Morrow is the old translation of what Jesus said.

Take no thought for the morrow. Now, I'm told that in old English, to take thought means to be anxious. That's why they translated that as in the modern translation of those words, you will read, don't be anxious about tomorrow.

Isn't it wonderful that in old English, to take thought is equivalent with being anxious? Take no thought means don't be anxious in fear. So, the discotheque is in the head.

A quick way out of it, of course you can simply allow space consciousness to arise, be a sudden alertness. And it always affects your entire being. That alertness is not a head phenomenon.

When that alertness arises, you feel whether you want to or not, you feel the inner body, which is beyond the physical appearance of body. It's becoming one again with the consciousness, the one consciousness of which the physical body is a temporary

expression. It appears as a physical body.

The essence of course is just pure intelligence, pure consciousness appearing as a form. So, to sense the inner body is a wonderful way of stepping out of the discotheque and uniting the mind, which is only its little tentacle of consciousness. It has taken form as the mind, and the mind is thought.

And so the mind returns to its source out of which it came, the one consciousness. It's a withdrawal from the manifested into the unmanifested, the source. And not that you have to stay there.

You withdraw and you know it. And then you can again interact with the manifested in a very different way because you know something that is beyond the manifested in yourself. So the way in which you deal with the manifested world, not that you're going to never touch the manifested again, no.

The way in which you deal with the manifested changes tremendously after you have touched within yourself the unmanifested essence of your being. But that's the vital thing, is to touch that, to know yourself as that. The vital thing is to withdraw for a while from the manifested, and you withdraw simply when the mind stops.

The withdrawal is there. And touch that. And the portal, the easy portal, is the inner body.

The inner body that you sense as you sit there. And if you don't sense it yet, begin with feeling your right hand, the aliveness that is there. For some people, closing their eyes may help because then you're not distracted for a while by visual perceptions and you can put your whole attention there in a relaxed way.

Just notice it, really, that's all it is. But not just for a second, continue to notice it. You notice your right hand from within, and you continue to notice it.

That's the ability to hold attention there in a totally effortless way. All it means is you continue to notice it. It's still there.

And all you have done is you've entered your body here, and even that will take away a lot of mental noise. Even entering the body in one part of the body only and holding attention there diminishes the amount of mental noise enormously. So you can do it with your eyes closed, you can do it with your eyes open.

Eventually, it will be very easy to be in the body and able to interact at the same time and perceive and still sense very strongly your right hand and your left hand and both hands together in the background. And you're still perceiving and hearing. And then gradually you sense your arms also.

So you're entering the body. And then you begin to feel your feet. There's a certain aliveness there also.

And your legs. And you're still perceiving this room. And you hear my voice perfectly.

And yet some of your attention is in here now. And it continues to be in here, as well as in sense perceptions. And the amazing thing that happens then, and you can notice it right now, the ability arises to perceive without naming, labeling, or interpreting what you're being, what you are perceiving.

You're perceiving not through your conditioning anymore. Fresh. Without past coming in and distorting what you're perceiving by putting a learned label on it.

Freshness of perception. And so what it really means is true intelligence begins to operate unobscured by conditioning of the mind. And to the conditioned mind, it looks as if you knew nothing anymore.

So we continue to sense the inner body. And at the same time, if we want to, we can see and hear. And it is possible that at times your consciousness will fluctuate.

There will be more attention in the outer and just a remnant of attention left in the body. Or there may be a large part of your attention on the inner body and a little bit for the external world, depending on circumstances. There may be times when it is beautiful to simply sit when there's nothing that requires your attention or dealing with in the external world, to simply sit and dwell and rest within this energy field of the inner body, which somebody yesterday called the joy body.

And that's a good word. Because if you stay there for long enough, there is a subtle aliveness there. And that is sensed.

You notice after a while there's joy. The simple joy of aliveness in every cell of the body that is obscured when you are trapped continuously in mental noise. The dog still has it, but he doesn't even know that he has it.

He just has it. The cat has it, doesn't know that it has it. It just goes.

I was told an amazing thing by a vet who comes into contact with everyday animals very well. And she said, do you know that cats purr not only when they are happy, they also purr when they are afraid sometimes. I didn't know that because I rarely...

The cats that I had were usually happy. But when they go to the vet, often, of course, cats are afraid. And some cats, when they're afraid, they begin to purr also.

And I thought, this is strange. I thought the purring was an expression of joy. And then I suddenly realized, and probably the vets don't know the reason either, but when their form is threatened, the form that they are, the cat form, they withdraw to the formless

within.

And the moment they withdraw to the formless, the joy is there despite the fact that their form is being threatened. That is the wisdom, the incredible wisdom of nature. That's just innate wisdom.

And it's so beautiful. And that's why nature is not afraid of death. It is still connected within with the deathless essence of being.

And every animal, when the form is threatened, it will withdraw to that. Not every animal purrs, but the animal then withdraws within. And we've lost that.

Humans gone out into, all out, all out there. It's all out there. Lost out there.

And now return, the return journey to a state that seems to have been lost. Of course, it was never really lost. You cannot lose the essence of your being.

But when you don't know that you have it anymore, it is as if you had lost it. What help is a bank account with \$100 million in Switzerland if you don't know that you have it? That's a deficient analogy because the state of connectedness with being is of infinitely greater value than any millions of dollars.

It is nothing compared to that. But you can see this. Of course, it was never lost.

But it was only as if it had been lost. You can't lose yourself, really. And you may have heard some teachers or teachings have to say, everybody is already enlightened.

They just don't know it. And then some people say, well, that doesn't make sense. How can you be enlightened and not know it?

Well, you could say, you are awake, in a way, but in the normal state of wakefulness, all that you know is the forms that arise in that state. And you identify it with the forms, the thoughts, the emotions, and the sense perceptions and the experiences. But you don't know the state of wakefulness itself, directly.

And that's all it is. So in that sense, you're awake already. It's just obscured.

And as you sit here, you sense the inner body. You dwell. There's an aliveness there.

And the greatest miracle, if you go away from here and all that, if the only change is that there are moments when you no longer label your sense perceptions or your experience, that's an enormous transformation of consciousness. Just be with what is in that state of clarity, in that state of knowing, a deep knowing, which looks as if you didn't know anything anymore from the point of view of thought. And then you begin to purr, perhaps not making sounds.

That's a return to that connectedness with being. And there's joy, which is different from happiness. You may continue to experience certain fluctuations.

Of course, you experience fluctuations in your outer life. It has ups and downs. That's in the nature of phenomenal existence, up and down.

And you may even experience relative happiness and relative unhappiness. They don't touch you deeply anymore, but there are periods when something goes wrong and it's not so nice. It doesn't feel so good.

Something has just gone wrong, and something right happens, and you feel, oh, it's great. You're no longer devastated when unhappiness comes. It is only a very slight movement.

I compare that to, if you're in a dark room and you have a candle in that dark room, whether the candle is lit or whether the candle is extinguished makes a lot of difference, enormous difference. When there's no sunlight in the room, you depend on the candle being lit to feel okay, and then open the shutters, suddenly the room is flooded with sunlight, and you may still feel, oh, it's so nice to have a lit candle here, and then there's times when the candle is extinguished. It doesn't make that much difference in a room that's flooded with sunlight.

That's happiness and unhappiness in the state of connectedness with being. And that's unhappy and unhappiness, happiness and unhappiness when the shutters are closed in the state of unconnectedness with being. Oh my God, here I am in a dark room.

Allow the tears to be there completely. We're staying in the body, and yet we're here. It is amazing to look at another human being and not need to label or interpret him or her.

That's how relationships become sacred. That's the spaciousness that makes a relationship, any relationship, sacred. Even buying a newspaper in a corner shop, a moment, not being simply facing the other in that state of clarity and openness.

Why do I need to label anybody? Because any label that I may have will refer to your form identity. It will refer either to your physical appearance, or it will refer to the psychological entity in the head, the conditioned me, or any label that I have about you could be an expression and will be an expression of my own form identity, my own conditioning, through which I perceive you.

I mistake you for the conditioning that I perceive through my conditioning in you. You can see how distorted human interactions become. The label that I put onto you is already an expression of my own conditioning.

And what I see in you, and maybe there's some truth to the label that I'm attaching to you, maybe it's not 100% distorted by my own conditioning, and yet all it will ever refer

to is the form identity, the conditioned entity that you think you are and that I think you are, never the essence of who you are. So by, somebody therefore said a long time ago, judge not, otherwise you judge yourself. Every time you put a label onto someone, you yourself become trapped in a cage of labelings.

You have not only trapped the other person, you have trapped yourself. And then that's the beginning of the relationship. And it will be problematic.

And there will be conflict, a lot of it. Because the basis for the relationship is illusion. And it's not that you completely, that you don't see certain things, but you kind of, you look through that.

You don't label it. There's this strange, there's the ability of seeing without labeling. Just in the way, this is why we talk so much about nature.

You see the tree, or you see the flower, and there is a, you know it, you see it, and you know it, but not through labels. In the same way, you may see certain aspects of a person's form identity and not label it. By not labeling it, you are not strengthening that person's illusion.

And you are not strengthening your own illusion, because that person is trapped in his or her form identity. If you label it, you strengthen the illusion. By not labeling it, just seeing it.

And not labeling is also a non-reactivity towards it. You see that particular form identity, but it's not labeled. And then often, it can awaken in the other, that which is beyond their own form.

And that could happen in the simple, just in the very simple way, they suddenly feel good being around you. It could be the beginning of that. Suddenly it feels so good to be near you, and they don't know why.

Because you are not confirming their illusion, their illusory self image. So for the first time, they can be themselves. They feel when they're close to you, they feel they are more themselves.

And that's in the body, in the body. Attentive, alert, present. Now in this state of non-labeling, when there's an openness to being, we're going to listen for five minutes.

It will seem longer than five minutes, but it's five minutes. We are going to listen to a Japanese flute, shakuhachi. And we are listening with the entire body.

Every cell of the body is listening, and it's listening primarily, track two, it is listening not so much to the sounds, but to the background of no sound, with every cell of the body. You listen to the space, underneath the sounds, you listen, not yet, I'll tell you, not, you

listen, it's important, there's another important thing here, the sounds, there's a point, when each sound comes to an end, paying attention to that requires a certain alertness, the sound comes to an end, this ending, every time that can take you into space consciousness. Really what that is, is that sound dies, and every time something dies, it takes you there.

Any form that dies, which means it dissolves as form, is an opening. That is the beauty of death, which the mind fears so much. Every, the death of each form is actually also, is not such a disastrous event, it is an opening into that which is beyond form.

You could say, if you want to use that kind of language, God is easily found in the presence of death. But the mind says, death is, how can God allow death, this is dreadful. So we listen with the entire body, paying attention particularly to where the sound ends, and then continuously, even while the sound is there, there is the background of stillness.

Paying attention to that, it's track two.

[Speaker 2] (1:04:44 - 1:05:13)

Track two.

[Speaker 1] (1:09:26 - 1:13:15)

In a little while, perhaps we can turn off the electrical system, and to enjoy some complete silence. And also this evening, is it at 8.30? We will have a silent meditation.

Well, who knows what happens unless we don't have a silent meditation. But, after the silent meditation this evening, I'd also like to exchange hugs with whoever wants to exchange hugs with me. And then tomorrow we'll continue with hugs also.

Not compulsory. So when it becomes very still here, when we switch off everything, really all you need to do is pay attention to that nothingness that is the stillness and that is within and without you. Pure, aware presence with nothing happening in it unless something happens.

That's okay too. But it's good to know it also in its undiluted pure form with nothing happening and not even needing something to happen. It'll happen anyway.

So let's begin the process of switching off these devices. Oh, just one more thing. I may ring the bell two or three times during the silence and then that is maybe the only thing that arises apart from certain bird song that may be there in the background.

The sound will arise and subside. Follow the subsiding sound with your attention until it disappears into nothingness. What is left when this last object that remained in your consciousness, which is the sound, finally dies?

All that's left is the attention in which the sound happened. All that's left is the awareness in which that sound happened and that awareness knows itself as awareness and there's the key. Okay.

Thank you.